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RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//JF/UNMA//
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RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUMICEA/JICCENT MACDILL AFB FL
RHMFIUU/COMSOCCENT MACDILL AFB FL
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2517
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 2685
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 5930
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 1342

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 002021

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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STATE FOR SA/FO (AMB MQUINN), SA/A, S/CR, SA/PAB,
S/CT, EUR/RPM
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN, KAMEND
OSD FOR BREZINSKI
CENTCOM FOR CG CFC-A, CG CJTF-76, POLAD
REL NATO/AUST/NZ/ISAF

E.O. 12958 N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: PRT/HELMAND FROM THE STARS AND STRIPES TO
THE UNION JACK THE UK ASSUMES CONTROL OF LASKAR
GAH PRT

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(SBU) SUMMARY: On May 1, the UK officially took
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charge of the Lashkar Gah PRT in a transfer of
authority (TOA) ceremony. The outgoing U.S.
commander told an audience of UK, U.S. and Afghan
attendees that U.S. troops can be proud of what they
achieved. The new UK commander said that the UK PRT
will build on the good work that the U.S.
accomplished. Local and international media covered
the event. The UK PRT civilian and military
presence will be much greater compared to that of
the U.S. PRT. The UK will also bring a different
approach to security and development. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) The long anticipated TOA occurred at 4:30
PM on May 1. Representing the provincial government
(the Governor and the deputy governor were not in
Lashkar Gah), Ministry of Interior representative to
the PRT, Colonel Fakhir, told the audience of UK,
U.S., and provincial government personnel that, on
behalf of the government, he officially welcomed the
new UK PRT. The government very much appreciated
the help that the U.S. had provided since June 2004
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and looked forward to working with the UK.

13. (SBU) The outgoing U.S. commander said that U.S. troops could be proud of what they accomplished during their one year tour. (Note: The civil affairs component of the PRT has started or completed 75 reconstruction projects, valued at about USD 10 million. End Note). He expressed his admiration for his Afghan counterparts, quoting an old Pashto proverb, I may not see you for 1,000 years, but I will think of you 1,000 times a day. As the U.S. PRT commander finished his speech, the U.S. flag was lowered and the UK flag raised.

14. (SBU) The new UK PRT commander said that he was very proud to take on the PRT and contribute to the security, governance, and development of Helmand province. He said that the PRT would build on the fine work performed by the United States.

15. (SBU) The TOA received significant attention from the media. In addition to local television and other Afghan journalists, British and Canadian media were also represented.

THE TRANSITION

16. (SBU) The Lashkar Gah PRT has been operated by U.S. troops since June 2004, although the present camp opened in March 2005. As a U.S. PRT, the population varied from about 90 to 110 soldiers, with one civilian representative each from State, USAID, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, respectively. The Texan National Guard provided internal security and force protection for the civil

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affairs contingent and the PRT commander. The Guards mission was to support the commanders leadership engagement missions and civil affairs reconstruction efforts throughout the province. Civil affairs projects reached every district in Helmand. A military police platoon provided basic training to the local police. In October, two U.S. police advisors arrived; in February, the first Poppy Elimination Program advisor arrived. The second arrived on May 2. These four officials work for DynCorps, a contractor to the State Departments Qs Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs.

17. (SBU) In preparation for the transition, a UK liaison officer arrived at the PRT in October 2005. Following his arrival, UK engineers made several TDY visits to survey the camp and plan for the necessary changes to support the UK deployment. In December, a UK PRT commander arrived. He maintained close liaison with his U.S. counterpart, learning about the issues and activities concerning the PRT. As UK troops began to arrive, they undertook missions, such as joint police patrols as well as visits to other districts, to explain to Helmand citizens the upcoming UK deployment and what it would mean.

18. (SBU) Construction began in January 2006. Since the UK PRT is also the location of the UK task force assigned to Helmand province, this required an expansion of camp facilities. As a result, one wall was pushed out to accommodate numerous permanent tents, including quarters for soldiers, offices for the task force, a new dining tent, and an ablutions block. The camp will accommodate about 400 personnel when all elements are in place.

A DIFFERENT APPROACH

¶9. (SBU) The UK emphasis will be on enhancing security and security/justice sector reform, capacity building of government entities, and economic and social development. A significant difference is the expanded presence, both civilian and military. When complete, the UK civilian component will consist of about 15 officials, including two Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) personnel, a Department for International Development (DFID) representative, and various contract advisors for police, justice, counternarcotics, and governance. There is also a fulltime UK contract advisor working with Helmand Governor Daud. The UK civilian component also includes a security team and armored vehicles. A senior FCO official based in Kandahar Air Field will also cover the PRT on a part-time basis.

¶10. (SBU) On the military side, the UK deployment will include about 3,300 troops. About 2,000 will

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be in Helmand fulltime, at a new base being constructed in the desert, about two hours northwest of Lashkar Gah. An ANA brigade will be located adjacent to the UK troops. The PRT itself will have a maneuver company, supporting PRT activities and enhancing security in the Lashkar Gah area. In addition, the UK plans to increase liaison with the local population through joint foot patrols and multi-day visits to outlying districts. All these activities will be conducted jointly with the Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police, or both, according to UK PRT officials.

¶11. (SBU) Development will also be approached somewhat differently. There is no UK equivalent to the Commanders Emergency Response Program. There is a quick impact program run jointly by the military, FCO and DFID; however, most development activities will be administered by DFID and much of that will flow through government ministries and national programs. DFID also plans to support the establishment of a fully representative provincial development committee. All activities will be overseen by the sub-national government.

COMMENT

¶12. (SBU) The relationship between the U.S. PRT and its host counterparts was very positive. In general, signs point to a similar relationship with the UK PRT. However, the UK will be operating in a different environment. While citizens are pleased with the idea that the large UK military deployment will enhance security, we have long been expecting an uptick in the level of violence this spring/summer in the south, but police and ANA redeployment and the substantial increase in British strength should make significant gains possible in Helmands security. Quick impact projects may also play a key role in maintaining development momentum until longer term projects are implemented. Poppy eradication may also have some impact on stabilization. Finally, there is the factor of the UKs imperialist past in Afghanistan three invasions that are still taught in Afghan schools. All these elements point to a sizeable challenge for the UK PRT and the accompanying military deployment.

¶13. Embassy Comment: It is true that Afghans have

a long memory for history, and a few Afghans even comment on the (unfortunate) British colonial history. In general, however, the great majority of Afghans understand and support the modern-day British role here.

NEUMANN